

South Fork Owyhee River Wilderness Study Area

1. The Study Area -- 51,632 acres

The South Fork Owyhee River WSA (ID-16-53/NV-010-103A) is located in Owyhee County, Idaho, and Elko County, Nevada, about 115 miles southwest of Boise, Idaho. The WSA includes 43,790 acres of BLM land and one 160 acre privately owned inholding in Idaho and 7,842 acres of BLM land in Nevada, for a total of 51,632 acres of federal land (see Table 1). This acreage includes 1,280 acres acquired from the State of Idaho in 1987 after the area was designated as a WSA.

Within Idaho, 90 percent of the WSA's 40-mile circumference is bounded by primitive dirt roads and fence lines while ten percent is bound by legal subdivisions along nonfederal lands. In Nevada, the WSA's nine-mile circumference is bounded by primitive dirt roads, fence lines and a gas pipeline. Four cherry-stem roads (6.5 miles) enter the WSA. The northern part of the WSA adjoins the Little Owyhee River WSA (ID-16-48C) and the Owyhee River Canyon WSA (ID-16-48B/OR-3-195) while the southern end of the WSA adjoins the Owyhee Canyon WSA (NV-010-106).

The WSA consists of a flat to hilly sagebrush-, bitterbrush- and bunchgrass-covered plateau dissected by 20 miles of canyons, including 17 miles of the South Fork Owyhee River. The South Fork canyon is 500 to 800 feet deep, narrow and very meandering. Portions of the canyons that are not sheer-walled are covered with sagebrush and bunchgrasses while the riparian area consists of narrow bands of lush grasses, rushes and sedges.

The WSA was studied under Section 603 of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA) and was included in the Owyhee Canyonlands Wilderness Environmental Impact Statement filed in October 1989. Two 640 acre inholdings acquired from the State of Idaho were included in the study process under the authority granted in Section 202 of FLPMA as were 1,165 acres of BLM land adjacent to the WSA in Idaho.

Five alternatives were analyzed in the EIS for this WSA: a partial wilderness alternative where 50,135 acres of BLM land (including the 2,445 acres studied under the authority of Section 202 of FLPMA) would be designated as wilderness and 2,662 acres would be released for nonwilderness uses, which is the recommendation of this report; two additional partial wilderness alternatives where 9,990 and 36,720 acres would be designated as wilderness, and 41,642 and 15,362 acres, respectively, would be released for nonwilderness uses; a no wilderness alternative; and an all wilderness alternative.

2. Recommendation and Rationale

50,135 acres recommended for wilderness (Idaho - 44,955 acres; Nevada - 5,180 acres)

2,662 acres recommended for nonwilderness (Idaho - 0; Nevada - 2,662 acres)

The recommendation for the South Fork Owyhee River WSA is to designate 50,135 acres as wilderness and release 2,662 acres for uses other than wilderness. The environmentally preferable alternative is the all wilderness alternative. It would cause the least change from the natural environment over the long term. The recommendation would use all practical means to avoid or minimize adverse environmental impacts.

The 50,135 acres recommended for wilderness designation are shown as the nonshaded area on the South Fork Owyhee River Proposal map. This recommendation would apply to the 160 acre private inholding if acquired by exchange with a willing owner. Appendix I lists the nonfederal land within the area recommended for wilderness and provides additional information on the acquisition of this land.

The 50,135 acres recommended for wilderness designation would enhance the National Wilderness Preservation System through the addition of 19.5 miles of spectacularly scenic canyon and 40,145 acres of surrounding plateau. The area is natural in appearance, has outstanding opportunities for solitude and for primitive and unconfined recreation and offers significant special features. The area can be managed to protect wilderness characteristics over the long term with a minimum of resource conflicts. The 50,135 acres recommended for designation are a portion of a proposed 385,080 acre Owyhee Canyonlands Wilderness which would include about 270 miles of desert canyon, 164 miles of whitewater boating opportunities and 292,640 acres of plateau.

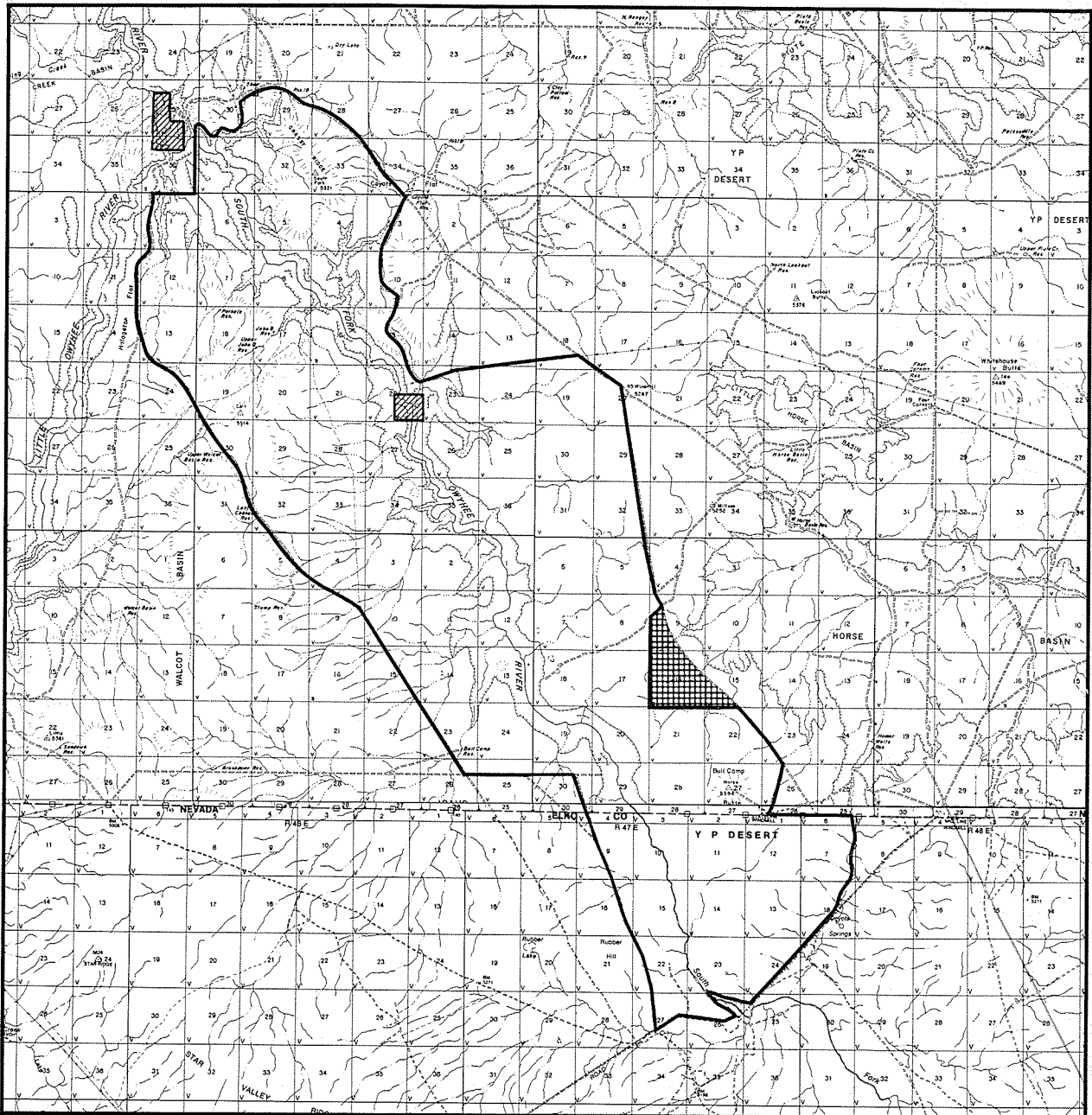
The 1,165 acres of BLM land adjacent to the WSA have wilderness values and were included within the area recommended for designation to provide a more definable wilderness boundary. Much of these adjacent lands, 930 acres, was acquired from the state in 1987.

The 2,662 acres of BLM land in the southern part of the WSA were not recommended for wilderness designation to allow for a utility corridor along the El Paso Gas Pipeline to accommodate above and underground transmission facilities. The utility corridor was identified through BLM's planning process.

R.5 W. | R.4 W.

R.4 W. | R.3 W.

R.3 W. | R.2 W.



T. 14 S.

T. 15 S.

T. 15 S.

T. 16 S.







T. 16 S.

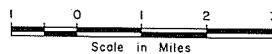
T. 47 N.

R.45 E. | R.46 E.

R.46 E. | R.47 E.

R.47 E. | R.48 E.

- | | |
|---|--|
|  RECOMMENDED FOR WILDERNESS |  SPLIT ESTATE |
|  RECOMMENDED FOR NONWILDERNESS |  STATE |
|  LAND OUTSIDE WSA RECOMMENDED FOR WILDERNESS |  PRIVATE |



**ID-16-53
SOUTH FORK OWYHEE RIVER
PROPOSAL**

DECEMBER 1988

**Table 1 -- Land Status and Acreage Summary of the Study Area
SOUTH FORK OWYHEE RIVER WSA**

Within Wilderness Study Area

	Idaho	Nevada	Total
BLM (surface and subsurface)	43,790	7,842	51,632
Split Estate (BLM surface only)	0	0	0
Inholdings (state, private)	160	0	160
Total	43,950	7,842	51,792

Within the Recommended Wilderness Boundary

BLM (within WSA)	43,790	5,180	48,970
BLM (outside WSA)			
Split Estate (within WSA) ¹	1,165	0	1,165
Split Estate (outside WSA)	0	0	0
Total BLM Land Recommended for Wilderness	0	0	0
Inholdings (state, private) ¹	44,955	5,180	50,135
State land (outside WSA)	160	0	160

Within the Area Not Recommended for Wilderness

BLM	0	2,662	2,662
Split Estate			
Total BLM Land Not Recommended for Wilderness	0	0	0
Inholdings (state, private)	0	2,662	2,662
	0	0	0

¹Appendix I is a detailed description of inholdings within the area recommended for designation.

3. Criteria Considered in Developing the Wilderness Recommendations

Wilderness Characteristics

A. Naturalness

The South Fork Owyhee WSA consists of a plateau dissected by 20 miles of deep canyons. Wildlife within the WSA includes California bighorn sheep, mule deer, pronghorn, mountain lion, bobcat, coyote, river otter, beaver, raptors, waterfowl, chukars, other birds and redband trout. The WSA is predominantly natural with less than two percent impacted by human imprints. These imprints are limited to widely dispersed rangeland developments including six small stock ponds, 14.3 miles of ways, 6.5 miles of cherry-stem roads and fences on the plateau.

In the canyon, imprints within the WSA are limited to some historic ruins. The El Paso Gas Pipeline and accompanying road can be seen from a small portion of the southern part of the WSA.

B. Solitude

The WSA's outstanding opportunities for solitude are attributed to the isolated, secluded canyonlands and the vastness of seemingly undisturbed desert plateau lands and distant mountain ranges.

The meandering character of the canyons and water courses provides excellent topographic screening between visitor groups. The depth of the canyons combined with limited viewing distances creates a sense of seclusion. The length of canyons allows visitors to easily find campsites which are away from other groups and to adjust their rates of travel to avoid others while floating or hiking.

From high points on the plateau, hundreds to thousands of square miles of open spaces can be seen stretching from Steens Mountain in Oregon to Juniper Mountain in Idaho and southward to the Bull Run Mountains of Nevada. These vast open spaces instill a sense of separation from civilization.

Solitude is sometimes disrupted by military aircraft. The southwest corner of Idaho is a military operations area (MOA) for training pilots in low elevation, subsonic flight mostly in fighter-bomber type aircraft. Flights occur as low as 100 feet above the plateau. Due to the variation in flight patterns and schedules over this large area, impacts upon solitude to visitors vary greatly. At times, aircraft can be seen and/or heard flying all day. Other times, one can travel for several days and not see or hear a military jet.

C. Primitive and Unconfined Recreation

The natural features contribute to outstanding opportunities for primitive and unconfined recreation found in the WSA. The scenic natural features and diversity of rugged landforms attract people interested in hunting, backpacking and river running and other activities such as sightseeing, photography, wildlife viewing, botanical studies and fishing. River running opportunities on the South Fork Owyhee River are of exceptionally high quality.

The miles of canyons, their diversely and severely eroded rock landscapes and their steep slopes create a sense of isolation or solitude, thereby enhancing the primitive recreation experience. Visitors traveling in or near the canyons are constantly aware of the forces of nature. Floating or hiking along the river and tributary streams gives a sense of participation in the movements of a natural force.

The challenge and excitement of whitewater rapids add significantly to the boating experience. Hiking the rugged canyons and plateau without the aid of established trails provides a natural and arduous recreational challenge which heightens the primitive experience.

The numerous talus slopes of the canyons encourage travel on both the river and plateau. Recreational use of the plateau concentrates near the canyon rims. Rimrock areas often offer less arduous hiking conditions than those in the canyons and provide opportunities for spectacular vistas of the canyons below. Hiking on the plateau provides an opportunity to experience vast open spaces stretching into the distant horizon.

D. Special Features

The South Fork Owyhee River WSA is rich in special features including scenic, scientific, wildlife and cultural values. The special features contribute significantly to the overall quality of the wilderness characteristics.

The canyons of the South Fork Owyhee River are of exceptionally high scenic quality. The combination of moving water, colorful sheer cliffs, grass-covered talus slopes and blue sky creates a stark beauty which envelopes the visitor. In places, reddish brown cliffs drop hundreds of feet to the water. These fractured, blocky rock monoliths are tinted with brilliant green, yellow and orange microflora. Near the base of the cliffs, water sometimes seeps from the fractures to nourish small, lush, clinging, deep green plant communities. The monoliths are frequently topped with a multitude of diversely eroded spires. The sheer rock walls often give way to steep slopes covered with a mosaic of red rock rubble and subdued green and yellow sagebrush and grasses.

Sensitive wildlife species found in the WSA include California bighorn sheep, bobcat, river otter and redband trout. Of particular concern is the population of bighorn sheep, a species dependent upon wildlands habitat for its survival. In 1985, bighorn sheep were reintroduced into the South Fork Owyhee River WSA canyons.

Sensitive plant species found in the WSA include *Eatonella nives*, *Lupinus uncialis*, *Artemisia packardiae* and *Malacothrix*.

The WSA contains both historic and prehistoric archaeological sites. Prehistoric sites are found both on the plateau and in caves and rock shelters within the canyons. Historic sites include the ruins of several stone buildings and rock walls along the river.

Diversity in the National Wilderness Preservation System

A. Assessing the Diversity of Natural Systems and Features as Represented by Ecosystems

Wilderness designation of the South Fork Owyhee River WSA would not add a new ecosystem to the National Wilderness Preservation System (NWPS); however, it would add a landform not presently represented in the Sagebrush Steppe Ecosystem. The landform is dominated by rhyolite uplands cut by deep canyons. This ecosystem is represented by three designated areas with 76,699 acres. There are 35 other BLM study areas in the state under study with this ecosystem. This information is summarized on Table 2.

TABLE 2

Ecosystem Representation

Bailey-Kuchler Classification	<u>NWPS Areas</u>		<u>Other BLM Studies</u>	
	areas	acres	areas	acres
Dry Domain/Intermountain Sagebrush Province				
			<u>NATIONWIDE</u>	
Sagebrush Steppe Ecosystem	3	76,699	136	4,359,340
			<u>IDAHO</u>	
Sagebrush Steppe Ecosystem	1	12,997	35	949,916
			<u>NEVADA</u>	
Sagebrush Steppe Ecosystem	1	32,407	29	1,273,919
			<u>CALIFORNIA</u>	
Sagebrush Steppe Ecosystem	0	0	5	152,431
			<u>OREGON</u>	
Sagebrush Steppe Ecosystem	0	0	67	1,983,074

**B. Expanding the Opportunities for Solitude or Primitive Recreation
Within a Day's Driving Time (Five Hours) of Major Population Centers**

The South Fork Owyhee River WSA is within a five-hour drive from Boise, Idaho. Table 3 summarizes the number and acreage of designated areas and other BLM study areas within a five-hour drive of the population center.

Table 3

**Wilderness Opportunities for Residents
of Major Population Centers**

Population Centers	<u>NWPS Areas</u>		<u>Other BLM Studies</u>	
	areas	acres	areas	acres
Boise, Idaho	16	4,741,570	141	5,374,250

C. Balancing the Geographic Distribution of Wilderness Areas

The South Fork Owyhee River WSA would contribute to balancing the geographic distribution of areas within the NWPS. Regionally, the WSA would add a desert canyon system not found in designated wilderness and would help to balance opportunities to attain diverse wilderness experiences.

Manageability

The WSA can be managed in the long term to protect wilderness characteristics. There are no resource uses which could not be adequately controlled or would affect the manageability of the wilderness. The WSA is over 27 miles from a paved highway. Vehicle access to the WSA boundaries is via some gravel roads but mostly along dirt roads which have received minimal construction and little or no maintenance. Much of the plateau within the WSA is relatively flat but many areas (particularly those close to the canyons) are strewn with rock rubble and impassable to vehicles.

Energy and Minerals Resource Values

The U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) and the Bureau of Mines (BM) prepared a mineral assessment for 47,610 acres of the WSA in 1987. The assessment found that the area has a low mineral resource potential for all metals and no claims exist.

Oil and gas leases and lease applications cover a part of the area but no resources have been identified. Energy potential for oil, gas and coal is low.

Sand and gravel deposits are present and volcanic rocks that might be used as dimension stone or decorative rock are widespread but larger deposits are widely available in more accessible areas.

Chalcedony and common opal may have been recovered from three prospects in the northern part of the WSA. The lack of bright and interesting colors and patterns in the minerals limits their value and marketability for lapidary purposes.

In 1989, a 60-day public review of the USGS/BM mineral survey report for the WSA was conducted. During the review, comments were submitted which resulted in follow-up consideration by the USGS. Based on this reevaluation, the USGS upgraded the mineral potential rating from low to moderate for undiscovered resources of low-grade, epithermal hot-spring gold and silver deposits in the WSA.

Impacts on Resources

The following comparative impact table summarizes the effects on pertinent resources for all alternatives considered including designation or nondesignation of the entire area as wilderness.

Table 4
Comparative Summary of the Impacts by Alternative
WSA ID-16-53/NV-010-103A (SOUTH FORK OWYHEE RIVER)

ISSUE TOPICS	PROPOSED ACTION	NO ACTION ALTERNATIVE (NO WILDERNESS)	CANYONLANDS WILDERNESS ALTERNATIVE	WILDLIFE WILDERNESS ALTERNATIVE	ALL WILDERNESS ALTERNATIVE
Impacts on Wilderness Values	<p>WILDERNESS (50,135 acres) No significant change in naturalness or solitude/primitive recreation opportunities on 50,135 acres from management actions. Slight enhancement in naturalness and primitive recreation opportunities from improved grazing practices and prescribed burning and from closure of 20 miles of roads/ways to recreation use. However, continued use of vehicle routes for rangeland facility maintenance to prevent complete rehabilitation of routes. Some localized reduction in naturalness from trampling of river campsite vegetation by recreation use. Recreation use in 20 years to reach 1,217 user days for boating, 200 user days for backpacking and 300 user days for other activities. Such use to have no impact on solitude/primitive recreation opportunities overall nor naturalness away from shoreline.</p> <p>NONWILDERNESS (2,662 acres) Entire 2,662 acres to have loss of naturalness and primitive recreation from utility corridor construction activities. Recreation use to reach 30 user days per annum in 20 years and have no impact on naturalness or solitude/primitive recreation opportunities.</p>	<p>NONWILDERNESS (50,352 acres) No significant change in naturalness or solitude/primitive recreation opportunities on 36,640 acres from management actions. Slight enhancement in naturalness and primitive recreation opportunities on plateau from improved grazing practices and prescribed burning except on 11,050 acres. Loss of naturalness and primitive recreation opportunities on 11,050 acres from drill seeding land treatments. Loss of naturalness and primitive recreation opportunities on an additional 2,662 acres from utility corridor construction activities. Some localized reduction in naturalness from trampling of river campsite vegetation by recreation use. Recreation use per annum in 20 years to reach 1,217 user days for boating, 150 user days for backpacking and 390 user days for other activities. This use not to affect solitude/primitive recreation opportunities overall nor naturalness away from river shoreline.</p>	<p>WILDERNESS (9,990 acres) No significant change in naturalness or solitude/primitive recreation opportunities on 9,990 acres from management actions. Some localized reduction in naturalness from trampling of river campsite vegetation by recreation use. Recreation use per annum in 20 years to reach 1,217 user days for boating, 100 user days for backpacking and 100 user days for other activities. Such use to have no impact on solitude/primitive recreation opportunities overall nor naturalness away from river shoreline.</p> <p>NONWILDERNESS (41,642 acres) No significant change in naturalness or solitude/primitive recreation opportunities on 27,930 acres. Slight enhancement in naturalness and primitive recreation opportunities on plateau from improved grazing practices and prescribed burning except on 11,050 acres. Loss of naturalness and primitive recreation opportunities on 11,050 acres from drill seeding land treatments. Loss of naturalness on an additional 2,662 acres from utility corridor construction activities. Recreation use per annum in 20 years to reach 50 user days for backpacking and 290 user days for other activities. Such use not to affect naturalness or solitude/primitive recreation opportunities.</p>	<p>WILDERNESS (36,720 acres) No significant change in naturalness or solitude/primitive recreation opportunities on 36,720 acres from management actions. Slight enhancement in naturalness and primitive recreation opportunities on plateau from improved grazing practices and prescribed burning and from closure of 17 miles of roads/ways to recreation use. Some localized reduction in naturalness from trampling of river campsite vegetation by recreation use. Recreation use per annum in 20 years to reach 1,217 user days for boating, 200 user days for backpacking and 175 user days for other activities. This use not to impact solitude/primitive recreation opportunities overall nor naturalness away from river shoreline.</p> <p>NONWILDERNESS (15,362 acres) No significant change in naturalness or solitude/primitive recreation opportunities on 1,650 acres. Loss of naturalness and primitive recreation opportunities on 11,050 acres from drill seeding land treatments and on 2,662 acres from utility corridor construction activities. Recreation use per annum to reach 175 user days in 20 years and have no impact on naturalness or solitude/primitive recreation opportunities.</p>	<p>WILDERNESS (51,867 acres) No significant change in naturalness or solitude/primitive recreation opportunities on 51,867 acres from management actions. Slight enhancement in naturalness and primitive recreation opportunities on plateau from improved grazing practices and prescribed burning and from closure of 21 miles of roads/ways to recreation use. However, continued use of vehicle routes for rangeland facility maintenance to prevent complete rehabilitation of routes. Some localized reduction in naturalness from trampling of river campsite vegetation by recreation use. Recreation use per annum in 20 years to reach 1,217 user days for boating, 200 user days for backpacking and 275 user days for other activities. Such use not to affect solitude/primitive recreation opportunities overall nor naturalness away from the river shoreline.</p>
Impacts on the Condition and Amount of Native Vegetation (Continued next page)	<p>WILDERNESS Ecological condition of native plant communities improved on 32,555 acres and retained in good condition on 17,580 acres by grazing practices.</p> <p>NONWILDERNESS Ecological condition of native plant communities improved on 2,656 acres. Native plants displaced on</p>	<p>NONWILDERNESS Ecological condition of native plant communities improved on 32,806 acres and retained in good condition on 17,540 acres by grazing practices. Native vegetation displaced on 6 acres by utility corridor construction activities.</p>	<p>WILDERNESS Ecological condition of native plant communities retained in good condition on 9,990 acres.</p> <p>NONWILDERNESS Ecological condition of native plant communities improved on 31,686 acres and retained in good condition on 7,550 acres by grazing practices. Native plants displaced on</p>	<p>WILDERNESS Ecological condition of native plant communities improved on 19,530 acres and retained in good condition on 16,740 acres by grazing practices.</p> <p>NONWILDERNESS Ecological condition of native plant communities improved on 12,162 acres and retained in good condition on 800 acres by</p>	<p>WILDERNESS Ecological condition of native plant communities improved on 34,327 acres and retained in good condition on 17,540 acres by grazing practices.</p>

ISSUE TOPICS	PROPOSED ACTION	NO ACTION ALTERNATIVE (NO WILDERNESS)	CANYONLANDS WILDERNESS ALTERNATIVE	WILDLIFE WILDERNESS ALTERNATIVE	ALL WILDERNESS ALTERNATIVE
Impacts on the Condition and Amount of Native Vegetation (continued) (South Fork Owyhee River WSA)	6 acres by utility corridor construction activities.		2,400 acres by seeding. Vegetation displaced on additional 6 acres by utility corridor construction activities.	grazing practices. Native plants displaced on 2,400 acres by seeding. Vegetation also displaced on 6 acres by utility corridor construction activities.	
Impacts on Selected Wildlife Populations (Bighorn Sheep, Mule Deer, Antelope and Sage Grouse)	<p>WILDERNESS Increased recreation use to have minimal impact to wildlife populations. Only localized temporary wildlife displacement expected during periods of recreation activity. Road/way closure would reduce potential for wildlife disturbance from recreational vehicle use. Increased forage availability and enhanced overall habitat condition resulting from improved grazing practices, reservoir maintenance, prescribed burning and seeding on plateau would increase wildlife populations.</p> <p>NONWILDERNESS Increased livestock number would compete with and reduce potential wildlife populations on non-suitable lands. Utility corridor construction would cause only temporary displacement of wildlife populations.</p>	<p>NONWILDERNESS Increased recreation use to have minimal impact to wildlife populations. Only localized temporary wildlife displacement expected during periods of recreation activity. Increased forage availability and enhanced overall habitat condition resulting from improved grazing practices, reservoir maintenance, prescribed burning and seeding on plateau would increase wildlife populations. However, increased livestock numbers would compete with and reduce potential wildlife populations. Utility corridor construction would cause only temporary displacement of wildlife populations.</p>	<p>WILDERNESS/ NONWILDERNESS Impacts the same as those of the No Action Alternative.</p>	<p>WILDERNESS/ NONWILDERNESS Impacts the same as those of the Proposed Action.</p>	<p>WILDERNESS Increased recreation use to have minimal impact to wildlife populations. Only localized temporary wildlife displacement expected during periods of recreation activity. Road/way closures would reduce potential for wildlife disturbance from recreational vehicle use. Increased forage availability and enhanced overall habitat condition resulting from improved grazing practices, reservoir maintenance and prescribed burning would increase wildlife populations.</p>
Impacts on Semi-Primitive Motorized Recreation Use	<p>WILDERNESS/ NONWILDERNESS 20 miles of roads/ways closed to recreational vehicle use within wilderness. Semi-primitive motorized recreation use to reach 330 user days per annum in 20 years for hunting, sightseeing, rockhounding or camping in association with WSA boundary roads.</p>	<p>NONWILDERNESS All roads to remain open for semi-primitive motorized recreation use. Use to reach 390 user days annually in 20 years for hunting, sightseeing, rockhounding or camping.</p>	<p>WILDERNESS/ NONWILDERNESS There are no roads/ways within canyon wilderness to be closed to semi-primitive motorized recreation use. Annual use in 20 years to reach 390 user days for hunting, sightseeing, rockhounding or camping along plateau roads/ways.</p>	<p>WILDERNESS 17 miles of interior roads/ways closed to recreational vehicle use within wilderness. Use to reach 350 user days per annum in 20 years for hunting, sightseeing, rockhounding or camping in association with WSA boundary roads.</p> <p>NONWILDERNESS Non-suitable lands left open for vehicle access.</p>	<p>WILDERNESS 21 miles of interior roads/ways closed to recreational vehicle use within wilderness. Semi-primitive motorized recreation use associated with WSA boundary roads to reach 275 user days in 20 years for hunting, sightseeing, rockhounding or camping.</p>
Impacts on Livestock Use	<p>WILDERNESS/ NONWILDERNESS Annual livestock use to increase from 2,180 AUMs to 2,228 AUMs within 20 years on WSA lands.</p>	<p>NONWILDERNESS Annual livestock use to increase from 2,180 AUMs to 3,303 AUMs within 20 years on WSA lands.</p>	<p>WILDERNESS/ NONWILDERNESS Annual livestock use to increase from 2,180 AUMs to 3,303 AUMs within 20 years on WSA lands.</p>	<p>WILDERNESS/ NONWILDERNESS Annual livestock use to decrease from 2,180 AUM to 2,111 AUMs within 20 years on WSA lands.</p>	<p>WILDERNESS Annual livestock use to decrease from 2,180 AUMs to 1,666 within 20 years on WSA lands.</p>
Impacts on the Level of Soil Erosion	<p>WILDERNESS/ NONWILDERNESS Road/way closures to reduce associated soil erosion by 57 tons per year within wilderness. Improved grazing practices combined with prescribed</p>	<p>NONWILDERNESS Improved grazing practices combined with prescribed burning and seeding to cause reduced soil erosion over long term by 5-15%. However, 10-20% increase in soil erosion</p>	<p>WILDERNESS/ NONWILDERNESS Impacts the same as those described under the No Action Alternative.</p>	<p>WILDERNESS/ NONWILDERNESS Road/way closures to reduce associated soil erosion by 30 tons per year. Improved grazing practices combined with prescribed burning and</p>	<p>WILDERNESS Road/way closures to reduce associated soil erosion by 65 tons per year. Improved grazing practices combined with prescribed burning and decrease in projected</p>

ISSUE TOPICS	PROPOSED ACTION	NO ACTION ALTERNATIVE (NO WILDERNESS)	CANYONLANDS WILDERNESS ALTERNATIVE	WILDLIFE WILDERNESS ALTERNATIVE	ALL WILDERNESS ALTERNATIVE
Impacts on Soil Erosion (continued) (South Fork Owyhee River WSA)	burning and seeding and with a small projected in- crease in livestock use to result in a 5-15% reduc- tion in soil erosion over the long term on 40,362 acres of plateau. Utility corridor construction and maintenance to cause soil erosion of 8.7 tons per year.	from large projected in- crease in livestock use on plateau. Utility corridor construction and mainte- nance to cause soil ero- sion of 8.7 tons per year. Overall, soil erosion rates to increase by 5-10% on unsuitable plateau.		seeding and with a mod- erate increase or decrease (depending on location) in livestock use to result in a 5-15% reduction in soil erosion over the long term on plateau. Utility corridor construction and maintenance to cause soil erosion of 8.7 tons per year.	livestock use to result in 15% reduction in soil ero- sion over the long term on plateau.
Impacts on Water Quality	WILDERNESS/ NONWILDERNESS Suspended sediment loads in WSA tributary streams reduced by as much as 15%. Owyhee River sediment load not measurably affected.	NONWILDERNESS Suspended sediment loads in WSA tributary streams increased 5-10%. Owyhee River sediment load not measurably affected.	WILDERNESS/ NONWILDERNESS Impacts the same as the No Action Alternative.	WILDERNESS/ NONWILDERNESS Suspended sediment loads in WSA tributary streams reduced by 5- 15%. Owyhee River sedi- ment load not measurably affected.	WILDERNESS Impacts the same as the Proposed Action.
Impacts on Local Income and Jobs	WILDERNESS/ NONWILDERNESS Income and employment data by individual WSA is not available. For Owyhee Canyonlands WSA com- plex as a whole, the Pro- posed Action would con- tribute to a .3% increase in income and a .3% in- crease in employment over the next 20 years from livestock and recrea- tional use of the WSAs in the 3-county area (Owyhee, Malheur and Elko Counties).	NONWILDERNESS Both income and employ- ment from WSA complex up .4% in 20 years.	WILDERNESS/ NONWILDERNESS Both income and employ- ment from WSA complex up .4% in 20 years.	WILDERNESS/ NONWILDERNESS Both income and employ- ment from WSA complex up .3% in 20 years.	WILDERNESS From WSA complex, in- come up .2% and employ- ment up .3%.

Local Social and Economic Considerations

Designation of 50,135 acres as wilderness would have no significant social or economic impacts on the local communities of Owyhee and Elko Counties. The impact to local income and jobs was an issue analyzed in the study of the South Fork Owyhee River WSA.

Summary of WSA-Specific Public Comments

Public involvement has occurred throughout the wilderness review process. Certain comments received during the inventory process were considered in developing issues and various management alternatives. During the wilderness inventory for the South Fork Owyhee River roadless unit, 13 public comments supported establishing a WSA and four opposed it. Supporting comments said the area possessed the minimum characteristics necessary to be considered for wilderness as well as supplemental values such as wildlife, scenic, vegetation and cultural resources. Those opposed to the WSA felt that the area did not have significant wilderness characteristics and that "multiple use" would be better served if the area was released from further wilderness review.

During the public review of the Owyhee and Bruneau Management Framework Plans, 51 out of 55 comments supported wilderness designation for the Owyhee Canyonlands WSA complex with no specific comments on the South Fork Owyhee River WSA. Comments supporting wilderness designation were primarily aimed at the need for long-term protection of the high quality wilderness characteristics and special features of both the canyons and the plateau. Comments opposed to wilderness designation addressed a perception that "multiple use" would provide greater public benefit, that wilderness was not multiple use, and that public benefits could be optimized more effectively through a wild river designation in the adjoining Owyhee River Canyon WSA and with the further development of livestock and potential mineral/energy resources on the plateau and in the Owyhee River's tributary canyons.

During the public comment period on the Draft Owyhee Canyonlands Wilderness EIS, 448 written or oral comments supported all WSAs or portions of all WSAs in the Owyhee Canyonlands complex as wilderness, 46 comments opposed any wilderness in the WSA complex and 23 comments took no position. Those supporting wilderness for the South Fork Owyhee River WSA mostly were in favor of designating the entire WSA as wilderness. Support for the entire WSA as wilderness was based upon a desire to see wildlife, vegetation and other natural resources protected in the long term. Opposition to any of the WSA becoming wilderness was based upon a desire for improved livestock management opportunities, the need for continued use of the area for motorized recreation, the need to have further opportunities for the exploration and possible development of mineral and energy resources and the need to potentially develop utility corridors.

Government agencies took the following positions: the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service supported wilderness designation; the Bonneville Power Administration did not object to wilderness designation provided there was adequate consideration given to utility corridors; the U.S. Air Force supported wilderness if no significant restrictions were placed on military overflights; the Bureau of Reclamation had no objection to wilderness; the Governor of Nevada, the Nevada State Office of Community Services, the Nevada Department of Wildlife, the Nevada Division of State Parks and the Idaho Department of Fish and Game supported wilderness designation; the Nevada Bureau of Mines and Geology and the Nevada Department of Minerals could not endorse wilderness until more geological data was available; and the Idaho Air National Guard opposed wilderness as did the local governments of Owyhee and Elko Counties.

Subsequent to the May 31, 1984, conclusion of the public comment period for the Draft Owyhee Canyonlands Wilderness EIS, but prior to the completion of the Final EIS, 78 written comments were received. One of the comments opposed any wilderness designation in the WSA complex, one took no position and 76 supported wilderness designation. Of the wilderness advocates, 61 supported designating the entire South Fork Owyhee River WSA as wilderness. Most of this wilderness support was in response to a flyer sent out by the Committee for Idaho's High Desert and to an "alert" in the Sierra Club magazine.

APPENDIX I --SOUTH FORK OWYHEE RIVER WSA
Estimated Costs of Acquisition of Nonfederal Holdings
Within Areas Recommended for Designation(1)

Legal Description	Total Acreage	Number of Owners	Type of Ownership by Estate	Type of Ownership by Estate	Presently Proposed for Acquisition	Preferred Method of Acquisition	Estimated Cost of Acquisition	Estimated Cost of Acquisition
			Surface Estate	Subsurface Estate			Land Costs (in \$)	Processing Costs (in \$)
Parcel No. 1 T. 15 S., R. 1 W.	160	1	Private	Private	Yes	Exchange	N/A	4,500

(1)The estimated costs listed in this appendix in no way represent a formal appraised value of the land or mineral estate but are rough estimates based on sales or exchanges of lands or mineral estates with similar characteristics to those included in the WSA. The estimates are for purposes of establishing a range of potential costs to the government of acquiring nonfederal holdings and in no way represent an offer to purchase or exchange at the cost estimate included in this appendix.